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ABSTRACT

Emphasizing the fact that rural youth in the U.S. are heterogeneous in their values, backgrounds, cultural heritages, and aspirations, this paper cites literature and studies which indicate that within the last 10 years rural youth have become more alike than different from their urban counterparts in values, attitudes, life goals, and mobility expectations even though their capabilities are unquestionably poorer than those of urban youth. Summarizing conclusions derived from recent studies which indicate this phenomenon is the result of environmental disadvantages (comparatively poorer schools, cultural activities, medical services, housing, social services, etc.), this paper presents a prioritized list of changes needed to improve life chances and human resource development among rural youth. That list includes the following: development of a high priority national policy aimed at improving education, training, and counseling services for rural youth; initiation of massive Federal and state investments in education in deprived rural areas for equalization purposes; development of more adequate, cooperative, working linkages between levels of government, educational institutions, and special professional groupings; re-evaluation/modification of the objectives, programs, and practices of adult-led youth organizations serving rural areas, e.g., 4-H; instigation of changes in local educational structures which impede development of rural youth, e.g., narrow vocational curricula; and the involvement of parents with youth in career and educational development. (JC)

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THE TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION / J. E. Miller, Director / Texas A&M University / College Station, Texas

RURAL YOUTH IN THE USA:

PROFILE OF AN IGNORED MINORITY

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Revision of a paper presented in the "Rural Youth: Resource or Burden" seminar of the Fourth World Congress of Rural Sociology, Toruń, Poland, August, 1976.

INTRODUCTION

A number of reports have been produced in the United States over the past ten years which attempted to focus attention on the pressing problems of the country's rural youth (Burchinal, 1965; Nash, 1965; President's Commission, 1967; Henderson, 1970; Tamblyn, 1971; Moe and Tamblyn, 1974). Most of these reports focused specifically on educational needs, strategies, or programs. Still, there was nowhere available an overview of the nature of existence, social involvements, and behavior patterns of rural youth in the USA. Realizing this need, I attempted to provide a comprehensive synthesis of relevant research findings on rural youth in the USA in 1971 ("Rural Youth: Current Status and Prognosis"). A year later, at the "Third World Congress of Rural Sociology," I attempted to focus on the prospects of meeting the needs of rural youth within the framework of the broad "Rural Development" movement gaining momentum at that time (Kuvlesky, 1972). The general purpose of this effort is to extend these two efforts, utilizing new data and information that have become available.

My specific objectives are to provide a current, general, comprehensive description of rural youth in the USA and to attempt to ascertain some of their basic developmental needs. I will stress the diversity existing among rural youth, how rural youth compare with their urban counterparts, and whether or not rural youth's values, aspirations and needs are changing over time. This attempt to provide a general, comprehensive overview of rural youth in the USA and, at the same time, capture their diversity and changing nature, is certainly an extremely ambitious goal for a short paper. However, whatever success I experience will contribute to providing

a better understanding of the rural youth in the USA than now exists and help challenge some prevailing stereotypes about rural youth. Also, important lacks in knowledge will be revealed, which may stimulate the interest of others to join in the task of developing a broader and better base of empirical knowledge about and for rural young people. These are my basic intentions.

Number of Rural Youth in the USA

This paper focuses on rural youth residing in the USA.[1] Unfortunately many people, even knowledgeable citizens, believe this is a relatively small and unimportant population, due to the rapid urbanization of the USA over the past fifty years. This general impression has been supported by the predominance of attention and concern of national leaders and mass media on metropolitan problems during recent years. This belief is not valid--it does not correspond with the facts. There were over 25 million people under 25 years of age residing in rural areas of the USA in 1969 (Jimenez, 1973). This constituted more than one-fourth of all people of this age

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[1] For purposes of estimating the rural youth population, I have accepted the United States census definition of rural (i.e., places of less than 2500 people) and used a rather inclusive definition of youth which includes all people up to 25 years of age. Obviously, one can be critical of these rather arbitrary operational definitions. The common usage of "rural" usually refers to a more inclusive universe--sometimes all nonmetropolitan places (Bealer, et al., 1965). Youth most generally is used to refer to adolescents and young adults as does the term "young people." Both of these common usages will be reflected in the study populations involved in much of the research cited here. Most of the "youth" research done by rural sociologists in the USA has been restricted to older adolescents. On the other hand, as far as rurality is concerned, youth in a variety of size of place types have been researched. Personally, I feel that broad operational definitions of both "rural" and "youth" serve our purposes best; however, I selected the particular operational definitions above primarily to facilitate use of U.S. Census data tabulations and comparison of small scale studies.

grouping in the entire country, and roughly one out of every eight individuals making up the total population of the USA (see Table 1). The vast majority of rural youth as defined here (25 years or under) were 19 years or younger and fully two-thirds of the total were less than 15 years of age.

Almost one-half (46 percent) of the 54 million rural residents in the USA in 1969 were rural youth (Jimenez, 1973:5). But, these young people were not equally distributed across the country (see Table 2). The southern region had a disproportionately large share of rural young people -- over 10 million -- while the western region had the least.[2] Anyone familiar with the regional variation existing in the USA will recognize that life conditions and cultural influences vary a great deal in this regard. It can be observed from the data in Table 1 that most rural youth are "White"-- well over 85 percent.[3] The bulk of the remainder are "Black" youth, concentrated largely in the southern USA. For the most part, rural youth represent from 7 to 12 percent of any total ethnic population; however, in the case of "Native Americans" this segment constitutes fully one-third of this total, but small, ethnic group (see Table 2). In every region "White" rural youth are predominant and the bulk of the ethnic minority youth of a particular type tend to be concentrated heavily in one particular region.

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[2]The definitions of regions of the USA are those determined for use by the U.S. Census (Jimenez, 1973:9). Attention should be called to the fact that considerable intraregional variation exists by state in terms of number and ethnic types of rural youth (Jimenez, 1973b; Jimenez, 1973c).

[3]By "White" youth, we mean all those of European ethnic origin. This explicitly excludes Blacks, Native Americans (American Indians), and, for our purposes here, Mexican Americans as well.

TABLE 1. TOTAL POPULATION, TOTAL POPULATION UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE, AND TOTAL RURAL POPULATION UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE OF THE UNITED STATES, 1970.[1/]

NUMERIC DISTRIBUTION AND PROPORTIONS, BY RACE OR ETHNIC GROUPS

	Total Population	Total Population Under 25	Total Rural Population Under 25
Total	203,212,877	93,313,518	25,013,948
Black	22,549,815	12,174,722	2,395,260
Spanish Heritage*	9,294,509	5,356,860	679,236
Native American**	763,594	440,942	254,413
White*	178,107,190 (100.00)	79,861,555 (44.83)	22,263,349 (12.50)

Percentages are shown in parentheses.

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Final Report PC(1)-C1, United States.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Subject Reports, Final Report PC(2)-1F, American Indians. Table 2.

*Most persons of Spanish Heritage are counted also in the white category, so there is double counting; the sum of the groups will be greater than the total. A smaller number of Spanish Heritage persons are also counted as black.

**See Appendix for definition.

[1/] This table was taken from a recent publication by Luis Jimenez (1973, p.6).

Diversity Among Rural Youth in the USA

To a great extent, ethnic variability follows these regional demarcations: almost all rural Black youth are in the south, almost all rural Spanish-heritage youth are in the southwest and west, over half of the American Indian rural young people are located in the west, and the north central and northeast regions have very small numbers of any ethnic minority youth (see Table 2). So, there are important cultural and social variations among rural youth in the USA rooted to a large extent in the historical past (Kuvlesky and Edington, 1975; and Kuvlesky, Wright, and Juarez, 1971). This variability is clearly demonstrated in the results from a recent multi-ethnic comparison of status aspirations of rural youth reported by Kuvlesky and Edington (1976). The results indicate clear differences in the types and levels of occupational aspirations held by different ethnic groupings of youth living in similar kinds of rural areas (see Tables 3 and 4). Obviously, one must be cautious in generalizing broadly about rural youth across the various regions and ethnic groupings. At the same time, given the fact that most youth of each ethnic type came from "disadvantaged" families, it is quite clear that these rural youth generally desired upward social mobility regardless of ethnicity.

Regional and ethnic subcultural variations do not embrace all of the significant dimensions of heterogeneity that exist among American rural youth. Certainly, there are social class differences of considerable significance within regions and even local areas.

Obviously, there are dimensions of diversity among rural youth that are found in all youth populations -- age, sex, presence of disabilities of various kinds, and inherent cognitive and physical capabilities. These do

TABLE 2. RURAL YOUTH UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE IN THE UNITED STATES BY REGION* AND RACE OR ETHNIC GROUPS, 1970.[1/]

NUMERIC DISTRIBUTION AND PROPORTIONS AMONG GROUPS

		Race or Ethnic Group*			
	Total	White†	Black	Spanish Heritage†	Native American
North Central	7,400,329 (100.00)	7,287,110 (98.47)	63,237 (0.85)	57,314 (0.77)	43,613 (0.59)
North East	4,394,545 (100.00)	4,314,846 (98.18)	17,698 (0.40)	66,263 (1.50)	6,353 (0.14)
South	10,419,202 (100.00)	8,114,718 (77.88)	2,237,518 (21.47)	256,415 (2.46)	59,301 (0.56)
West	2,799,872 (100.00)	2,546,675 (90.95)	28,242 (1.00)	347,809 (12.42)	145,076 (5.18)
Total	25,013,948 (100.00)	22,263,349 (89.00)	2,346,695 (9.38)	727,801 (2.90)	254,413 (1.01)

Percentages are shown in parentheses.

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Populaton Fourth Count Summary Tape. Processed at Texas A&M University Computer Center.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Subject Reports, Final Report PC(2)-1F, American Indians.

*See Appendix for definitions.

†Most persons of Spanish Heritage are counted also in the White category, so there is double counting; the sum of the groups will be greater than the total. A smaller number of Spanish Heritage persons are also counted as Black.

[1/] This table was taken from a recent publication by Luis Jimenez (1973, p. 12).

have a significance in producing differences in needs, role definitions, behavioral patterns, and probably in more subjective phenomena such as values and aspirations as well. Recent research carried out at Texas A&M University, involving several ethnic groupings of rural youth, have demonstrated marked patterns of differences in values, aspirations, and behavior within rural ethnic groupings by sex (Kuvlesky and Edington, 1976; Patella and Kuvlesky, 1975; Miller, 1975; Kuvlesky, Wright and Juarez, 1971; Kuvlesky and Pelham, 1970). Obviously, age variability is of major importance in delineating particular kinds of needs -- youth at different stages of development will require different opportunities for leisure, different forms of counseling, and have different requirements for personal spacial mobility (transportation). Little in the way of formal research has been done to investigate these age differences -- most of the past research has been done in reference to adolescents and, more recently, on younger adults (Cosby, et al., 1973).

Rural youth in the USA are heterogeneous in their backgrounds, cultural heritage, values, and aspirations. One must keep this in mind as we attempt to generalize inclusively to all rural youth in the USA from the limited data and empirical knowledge available from relatively few studies scattered across space and through time.

RURAL VS. URBAN YOUTH

I have long maintained that the so-called significant differences observed to exist between rural and urban (metropolitan) youth in the USA in reference to values, attitudes, and aspirations is to a large extent based on research artifacts. We have had a tendency to predict these differences

Table 3. Interethnic Comparison of Type of Occupational Aspirations of Rural Youth by Sex.*

Type of Occupational Aspiration	Males				Females			
	Navajo	Mex. Amer.	Black	White	Navajo	Mex. Amer.	Black	White
	%				%			
1. High Professional	11	8	7	8	6	6	2	3
2. Low Professional	9	25	11	20	26	51	39	33
3. Glamour	5	9	27	12	2	8	17	16
4. Managerial	10	15	6	26	3	1	0	1
5. Clerical and Sales	0	3	3	1	41	20	23	29
6. Skilled	38	20	18	19	9	6	10	4
7. Operative	18	3	7	4	1	1	2	0
8. Laborer	1	4	5	3	7	2	4	4
9. Housewife	--	--	--	--	1	0	0	7
No information	8	14	15	7	3	5	2	3
TOTAL	100	101	99	100	99	99	99	98
	$X^2 = 124.19$ d.f. = 24 P = 0				$X^2 = 106.42$ d.f. = 27 P = 0			

*This table was taken from a report by Kuvlesky and Edington (1976:17).

Table 4. Interethnic Comparison of Occupational Aspiration Levels of Rural Youth by Sex.*

Level of Aspiration	Males				Females			
	Navajo	Mex. Amer.	Black	White	Navajo	Mex. Amer.	Black	White
	%				%			
High	25	42	45	40	34	65	59	53
Intermediate	48	38	28	46	54	27	33	34
Low	19	7	12	7	9	3	6	11
No information	8	14	15	7	3	5	2	3
TOTAL	100	101	100	100	100	100	100	101
NUMBER	170	170	98	148	215	197	94	153
	$X^2 = 39.4$ d.f. = 9 P = 0				$X^2 = 54.07$ d.f. = 9 P = <.001			

*This table was taken from a report by Kuvlesky and Edington, (1976:25).

and to find them by exaggerating the sociological and social significance of consistent, but relatively small, statistically significant variations between rural and urban samples. The internal variability always found to exist among any sample of rural youth appears much more substantial and important than the general, but slight, patterned differences between rural and urban residents of particular kinds. It seems quite clear to me that in the USA rural youth of a given type are generally more alike than different from their urban counterparts in values, attitudes, life goals, and mobility expectations (Kuvlesky).[4]

Given the assertion presented above, how can we then explain the unquestioned poorer capability of rural youth, as compared with urban youth, to realize their aspirations in vertical social mobility? Adequate research has not been done yet to provide a good answer for this question.[5] At the same time, inferences from research on skill development and other aspects of personal and social development indicate that the reasons for this

[4]Some American sociologists argue that the rural-urban residence variable has little utility as a significant social attribute in American society today (Bealer, et al., 1965), while others maintain it is still a significant differentiation (Glenn and Alston, 1967). It seems to me that rurality of residence may or may not be significant depending on a number of considerations -- age of respondents, attributes of units being studied, and region or specific location of area of study. We probably have given far too much attention to attempting to establish general classes of residence types and not enough to examining the variability among particular communities of a particular size.

[5]Several longitudinal studies have been reported on the social attainment process of rural youth over the past twenty years (Kuvlesky and Bealer, 1966). For the most part, these studies had little utility for the purpose stated above in that they involved too short a period of time, were limited to local populations, and usually did not provide for rural-urban comparative analyses (Kuvlesky, 1970). A relatively recent study started in 1966 by a group of rural sociologists in the southern USA ("USDA-CSRS," "S-61" and "S-81") and intended to continue through at least 1980 may provide a basis for eventually coming to grips with this question (Cosby, et al., 1973).

relative disadvantage may stem from differences in the contextual or institutional variations existing between rural and urban situations relative to socialization, education, and training (Kuvlesky, 1973). Haller (1969) clearly supports this contention with results from an overview of research findings on attributes of rural youth related to education. He indicates that in general rural youth start school with about the same level of capabilities and aptitudes as their urban counterparts, but, they tend to fall progressively behind as they grow older and move through the school grades. What is true in general is likely to exist in a more extreme sense in sections or regions of the country where particular rural racial or ethnic groupings are caught in pseudocaste type community stratification systems (i.e. the rural Black in the south and the rural Mexican American in Texas).

Unfortunately, while rural sociologists have studied the values and aspirations of rural youth rather intensively and extensively in the USA, we have largely ignored structural contexts which either facilitate or hinder the realization of rural youth's life ends (Kuvlesky, 1970; Falk, 1975). Falk (1975) has recently proposed a sketch of a "broader framework" for youth mobility studies that should help remedy this situation. Likewise, little published research exists pertaining to the patterns of behavior, interpersonal interactions, and social organization of rural youth. It is likely that rural vs. urban residence will make more of a difference in these things than in reference to values and aspirations.[6]

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[6]The reasoning behind this hypothesis is that while the widespread impact of mass communication has probably leveled prior intergroup variations in values and attitudinal phenomena, the contextual differences of interaction and social organization tied in closely with variability in size of place probably produces at least some differences in type and quality of interaction.

In a book chapter I wrote several years ago, I overviewed the very limited amount of research available on rural-urban differences in behavioral patterns of youth in the USA (Kuvlesky, 1973:329-331). This overview is provided in abbreviated form below:

> Relatively little has been done in terms of reliable statistical studies that permit easy generalization on the subject of rural youth's everyday behavior, and the best accounts are descriptions of particular populations. I strongly suspect that overt behavioral patterns of rural youth vary by regional and ethnic delineations (Preston, 1968, 1969). Descriptions of these types of patterns have been recorded for Mexican Americans (Moore, 1970:99-136; Grebler, et al., 1970:420-441; Heller, 1966; Patella and Kuvlesky, 1973). Negroes (Broom and Glenn, 1965; Proctor, 1966; Stapler, 1971), American Indians (Henderson, 1971: 61-70), and Appalachian youth (Weller, 1965).
>
> In general, rural youth do not have access to the variety of cultural depositories and events as compared with other youth (Allen, 1968). Their alternatives for use of leisure time and peer associations are often centered around high school activities and events, outdoor activities, watching TV, and parking along back roads. Perhaps one of the most frequently heard complaints of rural young people about their communities is that "There's nothing to do around here."
>
> There is no doubt that rural youth spend less time in school (legitimately or otherwise) and drop out of school more often than others -- this problem is particularly acute for ethnic minorities (Cervantes, 1966; Burchinal, 1965:113-148). On the other hand, particularly among the most economically poor, they spend more time in working at jobs, both during the normal school year and during vacations (Amos, 1965). Wallace (1965) indicates that rural youth in general have less contact with medical professionals and spend more time at home disabled than most of their urban counterparts. The fact that these kinds of patterns of rural-urban difference are linked with class position is demonstrated by a recent New York study reported by Ellenbogen and Lowe (1968). Not surprisingly, it has been reported that rural youth spend more time in face-to-face contacts with "kin" (Straus, 1969), but that this does not necessarily mean they have a better family life (Haer, 1952) or are better adjusted (Nelsen and Storey, 1969).
>
> Perhaps the most widely researched aspect of rural youth's behavior has been in the area of delinquency. In a recent overview of the literature on this subject, Polk (1965) has concluded that there are rural-urban differences in the nature of delinquent activity, organization of delinquency ("the delinquent subculture"), community definitions of delinquency, and in the way deviance is handled. According to the descriptions he gives of rural youth as compared to urban, they are more often guilty of "general misconduct" and less often of "serious offenses." Furthermore, rural youth are not as

"sophisticated" as their urban counterparts and are rarely organized into gangs. Findings Polk reviews indicate that rural communities are more lenient toward youth raising hell (i.e., drinking, fighting, gambling, picking up girls, trespassing on and destruction of property) and treat them more leniently when they are apprehended.

There is little doubt that there are general environmental differences that exist between rural and urban -- especially urban metropolitan places -- that produce situational and institutional differences for rural youth as compared with urban youth. The lower density of population coupled with the relatively lower level of economic development of nonmetropolitan vs. metropolitan areas certainly creates differences in the social environment which have an important bearing on how the developmental needs of youth are met (Moe and Tamblyn, 1974: Appendix). For instance, rural areas, relative to metropolitan areas, will generally offer fewer and more limited alternatives for exposure to a variety of leisure uses of time and cultural depositories (Allen, 1968). Also, the schools rural youth attend are generally much smaller, less adequately equipped and staffed, more limited in diversity of courses and programs and generally poorer than most metropolitan schools, excluding the center city (Tamblyn, 1971; Burchinal, 1965; Henderson, 1970:3-19).

In addition, we know that in many if not most cases rural youth's day-to-day living circumstances must be viewed as disadvantageous relative to their urban counterparts. They do not have access to the same degree or variety of health and medical programs (Taft and Byrd, 1972). It is also likely that in some regions many rural youth are still living in relatively primitive home conditions -- sometimes without water piped into the house, without adequate toilet facilities, and in poorly constructed or deteriorated dwellings (Dietrich, 1973; Dietrich and Greiser, 1974). These conditions are more likely to prevail in regions of the country having disproportionately high rates of rural poverty and large disadvantaged ethnic,

minority populations (i.e., south and southwest). Still, even in the other regions such circumstances, while not prevailing, will be found more often in rural areas than urban ones (Dietrich and Greiser, 1974; Kutner, 1975).

While rural youth may suffer disadvantages as noted above, certain aspects of their life experience as compared with urban youth might be considered advantageous: a greater frequency of interaction with family (Straus, 1969), an earlier and greater involvement in work roles (Amos, 1965), and an opportunity to participate more or less freely in outdoor activity. Again, however, we must keep in mind that great variations exist among rural places in the respects mentioned above -- and, in urban settings as well. It can be argued, in fact, that it is meaningless to compare rural and urban populations in a very general way in this regard because there is such variability among areas and communities within each type.

In summary, the available evidence appears to indicate that in the United States rural and urban youth currently do not differ importantly in the basic values and aspirations they maintain. At the same time, some scattered research results indicate that rural youth may differ generally from urban youth in social behavioral patterns, cognitive skill development, and normative roles. However, this accumulated research is based on studies too limited in scope and scattered through time to offer safe generalizations. Whatever the nature and magnitude of rural-urban differences in these respects, I think that the great diversity existing among and within subgrouping of the rural youth population is a much more important and significant object for study than a focus on rural-urban differences. On the other hand, rural-urban differences in the structure

of social contexts for interaction, socialization, and education are probably general, substantial and of significance, for human development from the perspectives of both the individual's and society's vested interests.

CHANGING RURAL YOUTH

1950 and Before

Prior to 1950, rural youth in the United States were widely believed to differ substantially from their urban counterparts in values and life aspirations. Some research evidence--mostly from the midwest and eastern regions--indicated that youth tended to value the family more and desire substantial vertical social mobility less than urban youth (Burchinal, et al., 1962; Kuvlesky, 1966). Rural youth then tended to, more often, desire agricultural or skilled blue collar jobs and did not generally desire a college education. Consequently, it was often assumed that one reason rural youth demonstrated less upward social mobility as compared with their urban counterparts was that they lacked sufficiently high status aspirations (Burchinal, et al., 1962). Personally, I doubt that rural youth in the USA at this time exhibited "low levels" of status aspirations relative to the status position or status attributes of their families of orientation; however, there is little doubt that their occupational aspirations were qualitatively different from their urban counterparts, and that rural youth were not generally oriented toward college (Kuvlesky, 1966).

The Sixties

During the sixties a number of social scientists were asserting that mobility aspirations and expectations had generally been rising among disadvantaged youth, including presumably most rural youth (Hughes, 1965:1135;

Broom and Glenn, 1965:182-183; Dyckman, 1966:802-803; Gans, 1968:36-48). At any rate, by the mid-sixties rural youth in the southern region and in the northwest were observed to have high occupational and educational status projections, which did not differ much from those held by urban youth (Kuvlesky, 1971:325-329). Supposedly, this "explosion of aspirations and expectations" contributed to the social militancy of some members of deprived groups and the aggressive social activism of youth during this period (Gans, 1968:40-48). Yet, little data could be found to provide firm empirical evidence for this presumed historical trend (Kuvlesky and Monk, 1975). Regardless of what kinds of actual historical change took place in the values and aspirations of rural youth over the period from the end of World War II to the mid-sixties, near the end of this period a large number of studies were carried out which provided ample evidence indicating that most American rural youth were very much like their metropolitan counterparts in their values, attitudes, and status projections (i.e., status aspirations and expectations). Perhaps, statements abstracted from a conclusion I wrote to an extensive overview of the relevant research literature at that time would be useful in describing the general state of rural youth's orientations in the early to late sixties (Kuvlesky, 1971:327-329):

> Most rural youth, regardless of race or class, are like most urban youth in having high ambitions for social advancement. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that sizeable minorities of disadvantaged rural youth have relatively low-level aspirations and expectations.
>
> Most rural youth do not want to stay in the country and even fewer expect to. At least, this is what the scant evidence on the subject indicates. The place of residence projections of rural youth represent a rational alignment with their high job and educational goals and the limited opportunities for vertical mobility available in the hinterland. It seems clear that, unless the orientations of today's rural youth can be changed, there is little utility in attempting to sell them so-called "rural values" and to prepare them for local, rural labor markets.

The rural-urban differences in age of marriage and procreation, although decreasing, are still so marked and persistent that one might presume differences in valuation of the family and, derivatively, differences in aspirations for such things. Yet, evidence from several studies of rural girls' projections for age of marriage and size of family apparently contradicts these notions. An investigation of East Texas rural girls indicates that most desire to wed relatively late (21 for the white and 22.5 for the black) -- considerably after the age of normal high school completion -- and want small families (3 children; Kuvlesky and Obordo, 1972). Again, this evidence appears to be in rational alignment with other status projections of rural youth and is indicative of a willingness to tolerate deferred gratification in reference to entering marriage and having children. The configuration of aspirations just described looks like a portrait of contemporary middle-class urban life. This is apparently the style of life most of our rural youth, even the most disadvantaged, want, and which many expect to obtain.

Recent research in Texas has indicated that some rural youth do place a higher valuation on goals linked to achieving social mobility (i.e., education, job, income) than they do to goals related to family and place of residence. These research findings are compatable with those described above and add to the evidence indicating that rural youth are, in fact, strongly oriented toward the American "success ethic" and are not too different from their urban counterparts in this regard. The stereotyped notion of rural youth being predominantly oriented toward short-run gratifications related to family, procreation, and rural living to the detriment of their ambitions for mobility stands seriously questioned.

The Seventies and Beyond

By the late sixties, rural youth of America seemed to have achieved a basic similarity with their urban counterparts in terms of generally adopting the "success ethic" -- the striving for the "good, materialistic life" and related values and orientations. However, about this time social scientists began to note what they thought was a growing "generation gap" between young people and their elders. Reich in his book, The Greening of America, (1970), which was widely read and quoted at the time, proclaimed that American society was undergoing a bloodless, youth-led revolution in values.[7] Others disagreed with him (Kuvlesky, 1973:321-322).

[7] Riech (1970:217-298) perceives what is in my opinion, a turning away from the prevalent value themes associated with a modern, industrialized society -- achievement, self-centeredness, impersonality, competition, and analytical thought.

At the time, it appeared to me that Reich's statement was an intellectual attempt to legitimize a host of rather loosely connected changing patterns of life and explicit protest movements mostly evident among a minority of middle class, college youth. In particular, I did not think that rural youth were participating in this "greening" process. My thoughts at the time were expressed as follows (Kuvlesky, 1971:322):

> Rural youth are not chafing at the bit to enter the value configurations and behavioral patterns labeled by Reich as "Consciousness III." My interpretation of existing research findings and my experiences with rural youth lead me to the conclusion that the vast majority of rural youth, for better or worse, are still much imbued with the success ethic: they still desire to achieve higher social rank, more material amenities, and to improve their life chances as compared with their parents. While they struggle with the transition from adolescence to adult status, as have all youth of all time, most do not reject the prime values and life goals of their parents.

Recently, Daniel Yankelovich (1974) reported a set of poll findings from a nationwide longitudinal study, from which he conlcuded that a dramatic change in values is taking place among young people in the USA. In his own words, "Indeed, so startling are the shifts in values and beliefs between the late 1960's . . . and the present time that social historians of the future should have little difficulty in identifying the end of one era and the beginning of a new one" (p. 3). The direction of the value changes he perceives to be taking place are not inconsistent with the changes predicted by Reich earlier.[8] Yankelovich proposed that this change in values resulted from very rapid major societal changes over a short decade, listing "twenty large-scale" changes from the "Late 1960's" to the "Early 1970's" (1974:3-11). At the start of the seventies youth in our society were apparently involved in a struggle of moral values which

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[8]Yankelovich (1974:9-11), unlike Reich, sees the value change taking place as a synthesis of old traditional values and "New Values."

included attemtps to articulate the traditional ideals of American culture (i.e., "equality of opportunity," "success," "democratic political power," "individualism," and etc.) with the stark realities of the Viet Nam War, the struggle for civil rights by Blacks and others, ambiguous ethics and moral codes, an increasing bureacratization of every-day life, and all the social stresses these trends and events produced.

Are the values of youth in American society changing dramatically? If there is any validity to Reich's (1970) "greening of America" thesis, one would expect to see youth at least lowering their valuation of achieved status goals relative to other life ends and, also, perhaps lowering the achieved levels of societal status they aspire to. The results of this kind of general shift in societal values would impact across the board on all kinds of youth. On the other hand, the "liberation" movements now in existence ("Women's Lib," "Black Power," "La Raza," and etc.) should produce a converse pattern of change -- raising status projections -- for selected groupings of the population, while leaving other groupings untouched (i.e., White, middle-class males).

As was mentioned earlier, no study designed specifically to ascertain historical changes in American youth's values and status projections existed until very recently. However, evidence is becoming available on current historical trends in this regard as a result of a recent collaborative study being carried out by a small group of rural sociologists in the southern U.S.[9] Results reported so far from this effort indicate that general changes are apparently taking place in the life aspirations and expectations of southern

[9]This group consists of those associated with "Objective C" of USDA-CSRS project "S-81:" John Dunkelberger (Auburn University), V.A. Boyd (Clemson University), George Ohlendorf (Louisiana State University) and Bill Kuvlesky (Texas A&M University).

rural youth (Kuvlesky, 1974; Kuvlesky and Boykin, 1976; Kuvlesky and Monk, 1975; Patella and Kuvlesky, 1975; Monk and Medina, 1976). These results also indicate that the patterns of change may vary by ethnic group and within ethnic groups by state or local areas.

To demonstrate these patterns, results from a Texas study of youth cohorts of the same age in 1966 and 1972 are summarized in Table 5 (Kuvlesky and Stanley, 1976:43). Among these youth it can be noted that over the six-year study period, there was a general lowering of projected status attainment for occupation and education and a tendency for less projected urban migration. At the same time, projections for family development indicated a shift toward marriage at an earlier age and toward smaller families. It was also observed that valuation of education relative to other life ends declined, while valuation of family aspirations increased, providing rather clear evidence that some value shifts took place. In general, Black youth changed more than White youth, particularly in reference to becoming much less certain about the chances of realizing their status expectations (Kuvlesky and Stanley, 1976:35-38). Findings from parallel studies in other states in the southern region support some of these results; however, they also demonstrate a good deal of variability in specific patterns of change -- some of which appear to be linked to the age of respondents studied (Kuvlesky and Boykin, 1976). While marked historical patterns of change were observed among southern Black and White youth, a lack of such patterns exists among Mexican American youth, according to recent Texas results (Kuvlesky and Monk, 1975; Kuvlesky and Patella. 1975).

The changes observed among the Texas youth and those in other southern states are not inconsistent with the more general value changes reported

Table 5. Summary Overview of Most General Patterns of Change Between 1966 and 1972 in Projected Status Frames of Reference of Rural East Texas High School Students**

	Education	Occupation	Place of Residence	Family	
				Age of Marriage	Size of Family
Aspiration Level	Lower	No General Pattern	Urban to Rural	Younger	Smaller
Expectation Level	Lower	Lower	Urban to Rural	Younger	Smaller
AGD*	Blacks: Less Whites: More	More	No General Pattern	----------(No measures)---------	
Intensity of Aspiration	Down	No Change	No General Pattern	Up	
Certainty of Expectation	Blacks: Less	----------→	No General Pattern	----------(No measures)---------	
	Whites: More	----------→	--------→		

*Anticipatory goal deflection -- incongruence between status objects specified for aspiration vs. expectation relative to a particular status area.

**This table was taken from a report by Kuvlesky and Stanley (1976:43).

by Yankelovich and generally fit the direction of value shifts described as the "greening of America" by Reich. However, it is too early to tell yet whether or not rural youth are undergoing a general and marked shift in basic social values, or, whether the youth studied were just responding to specific stimuli either related to changes in their immediate environment (i.e., racial integration of traditionally segregated schools) or other factors. We have speculated that several possible explanations for these changes might be as follows (Kuvlesky and Stanley, 1976:45):

(1) The success of the government-industry sponsored attempt to push vocational training as a rewarding and acceptable option to a college degree.

(2) Increasing realism (pessimism) among rural and disadvantaged youth relative to their chances of experiencing dramatic vertical social mobility.

(3) Changes in the distribution of relative benefits (pay, leisure) and costs (hours on the job, security) associated with different job types and different types or levels of education over recent years.

(4) The general negativism evolving about life in the metropolis.

The lack of similar changes among nonmetropolitan Mexican American youth clearly challenges any speculation that these historical trends are all-embracingly general. Still, it may be that the insular nature of the social environment Mexican Americans experience in south Texas may simply have slowed down the penetration of general shifts and they may be experienced later. At any rate, it seems clear that if general patterns of change are taking place among rural youth, these are not impacting at the same rate or to the same degree on all types of rural youth. Black youth are apparently changing more markedly than others; White youth are changing moderately, and Mexican American youth are not changing at all. This again emphasizes the need to keep uppermost in mind the heterogeneous character of rural youth in the USA.

Obviously, as a result of a rather generally narrow research focus on rural youth by rural sociologists and others in the USA, there are a large number of aspects of youth's life we know little about -- either in terms of current patterns or historical patterns of change. How are youth related to the broader community and society outside of the family and the school? Are rural youth in America changing behavioral patterns related to premarital sex, alcohol consumption, and etc.? How do rural youth get the life counseling they need, if they do? These are examples of questions that extant research can not provide answers for and indicate some lines of needed research for the future.

ARE RURAL YOUTH A BURDEN?

The answer to the question posed above, relative to rural youth in the USA, is both yes and no. Obviously, all youth must be perceived as a burden in the short-run in any society. A considerable investment is required on the part of the family and community to provide young people with the maintenance, general socialization, occupational training, and developmental opportunities needed to produce productive, adjusted adult human beings. Perhaps a better question to raise is are rural youth more of a burder than normal youth? In reality this question is no easier to answer. We must ask, a burder for whom -- the family, the rural community of origin, the probable urban community of eventual residence, or the society? It appears to me that the only way to evaluate such a question is in economic terms ("Human resources"). How much return does a given investment offer? Or, turn it around, how much investment do you need to get a given return? Somehow I think this kind of orientation provides a much too limited perspective for evaluating human development.

In the USA we maintain as cultural themes the right of the individual to self-realization (within some normative limits) and the belief in all youth having an equal opportunity to do so. This is not to say that the social reality fits perfectly with these ideals (President's Commission, 1967; Miller and Roby, 1970:119-160). Certainly, most rural youth are hindered, relative to many nonrural youth, in realizing their life ends, at least, in part because they are situated in small communities rather than metropolitan areas. They are at a relative disadvantage in realizing their personal and social potentials as adults.

At present the American society at large (i.e., the federal government) has not accepted the burden of equalizing opportunity for rural youth relative to nonrural youth. It is not likely that either most rural families or small communities will have the resources to do so. It is also quite probable that most small communities have not and will not be inclined to do so (Gans, 1968). What is true for rural youth in general in this regard, is going to exist to a greater degree for rural minority youth and the rural poor. There are many ways of helping rural youth in the USA increase the chances of obtaining their life ends and a satisfying and productive social existence.

Over the last five years, I have written at length in offering suggestions in this regard (Kuvlesky, 1971; Kuvlesky and Stutz, 1972; Wright, Kuvlesky and Salinas, 1973; Kuvlesky (Sociologica sela, 1975); Kuvlesky and Boykin, 1976). A brief summary of some of the more important general changes that I think are needed to provide for improvement of life chances and human resource development among rural youth in the USA is provided in the listing below:

(1) The first and most important need is the development of a high priority national policy aimed at improving education, training, and counseling services for rural youth, particularly for those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

(2) There is a need for massive federal and state investments in education in deprived rural areas to equalize quality of instruction, facilities, and availability of alternative opportunities relative to metropolitan areas.

(3) There is a need to develop more adequate, cooperative, working linkages between levels of government, educational institutions, and special professional groupings having a role to play or a concern with rural young people.

(4) There is a need to reevaluate and perhaps modify the objectives, programs, and practices of adult-lead youth organizations serving rural areas (i.e., Future Farmers of America , Future Homemakers of America, and 4-H). These can play a broader role in meeting needs of more rural youth than they have in the past. Also, we need to consider the possibility of evolving new organizations of this type.

(5) There is a need to instigate changes in local educational structures prevailing in some regions or local areas which impede development of rural youth -- the sanctity of the local school and local control of it, the emphasis on too few and too narrow vocational programs, the tendency to restrict counseling to vocational interests, the lack of student involvement in decision making, the tendency to make do with teachers who are readily available or who cost little, and the lack of concern for the development of broad, continuous educational programs reaching beyond adolescence.

(6) The need to get parents involved, with youth, in thinking through life plans, career lines, and educational needs.

Obviously, this list could be expanded and each point needs considerable elaboration. Besides the reports I have authored, as cited above, I suggest to you a report by the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty (1967:41-58). This report provides rationales for the suggested changes listed above and offers thirty-three recommendations for improving rural education. At a more general level, James Coleman and his associates

on the "Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee" (1974: Part 4) have recently published a report offering an imaginative set of alternative structures and programs for improving American education. Many of these have relevance to meeting the needs I have mentioned above.

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